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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DURBAN 000010

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

FOR AF/S; INR

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SF](#)
SUBJECT: IFP LEADERSHIP BATTLE CONTINUES

REF: A 09 DURBAN 50; B 09 DURBAN 100

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY. The redeployment of Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) National Chairperson Zanele kaMagwaza-Msibi has deepened fissures within the party. KaMagwaza-Msibi's supporters claim certain IFP leaders are attempting to separate her from her constituency ahead of the party's elective conference. African National Conference (ANC) officials have publicly invited kaMagwaza-Msibi to join their party claiming that the IFP is not women friendly. KaMagwaza-Msibi temporarily retreated from public life but remains the most likely candidate to succeed IFP president Mangosuthu Buthelezi. END SUMMARY.

FIGHT FOR POWER

12. (SBU) Rumors that IFP founder and president Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi might soon step down have created a scramble for power within the party. The two most likely IFP leaders to succeed Buthelezi are kaMagwaza-Msibi and IFP General Secretary Musa Zondi. While these two leaders have stated publicly that they would not stand against Buthelezi at the IFP's elective conference in May, supporters of both leaders have openly clashed and called for new leadership (Ref B).

13. (SBU) KaMagwaza-Msibi has been tipped by media and political analysts as representing the best chance for the IFP to revive its political prospects (Ref A). She is a forward-thinking politician who enjoys the support of the IFP Youth Brigade, the IFP Women's Brigade, and progressives within the party. KaMagwaza-Msibi's successful run as mayor of Zululand, a major KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) municipality, is a bright spot for a party that has, for many, come to represent incompetent or incapable public service. Zondi, on the other hand, is a more distant leader but has the support of IFP traditionalists (Ref B). KaMagwaza-Msibi's supporters claim that Zondi's supporters are behind attempts to harass kaMagwaza-Msibi into submission and keep her from running for party president.

14. (SBU) As the succession contest has grown increasingly public and rancorous, kaMagwaza-Msibi has avoided media events and has stopped attending IFP meetings. An uncharacteristically exasperated kaMagwaza-Msibi told Pol/Econ Assistant on January 26 that she 'did not want to discuss her situation.' She did,

however, offer that she was under `a lot of party pressure.' IFP Deputy National Spokesperson Thulasizwe Buthelezi (a known Zondi supporter) told Pol/Econ Assistant on January 25 that party leaders are growing concerned about kaMagwaza-Msibi's recent behavior. They are even considering asking Prince Buthelezi to speak with her to determine if she is well, he added.

KAMAGWAZA-MSIBI TOLD TO MOVE UP, NOT OUT

15. (SBU) On January 31, the IFP National Council resolved to redeploy kaMagwaza-Msibi from her mayoral position to the KZN Legislature. Because kaMagwaza-Msibi must step down after her current mayoral term ends in 2011, the IFP wants to move her now in order to secure her service to the party beyond that time, Zondi told local media of the national council's resolution. KaMagwaza-Msibi's supporters, however, believe that the national council's decision is an attempt to separate kaMagwaza-Msibi from her constituency ahead of the elective conference. In response to the redeployment, angered IFP members formed the Friends of Zanele kaMagwaza-Msibi group (FOZ), which calls for kaMagwaza-Msibi to be elected party president. Although she has previously called for party members to desist from campaigning for new leadership ahead of the IFP elective conference (Ref B), kaMagwaza-Msibi has not denounced the latest calls for her to be elected president. FOZ Spokesperson Nhlanhla Khawula told Pol/Econ assistant that FOZ will support kaMagwaza-Msibi `till the end' and that they stand against leaders such as KZN IFP Chairperson Mtomuhle Khawula (who happens to be his brother) who declare that the IFP will `never be led by a woman.

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16. (SBU) In response to rumors that prominent IFP mayors and councilors were planning to condemn publicly kaMagwaza-Msibi's redeployment, IFP National Organizer Albert Mncwango (a known Zondi supporter) released a press statement on January 28 threatening to dismiss from the party anyone who stood against the IFP's resolutions.

ANC GLADLY FUELS FLAMES OF GENDER DISCONTENT

17. (SBU) Political rivals in the ANC capitalized on the IFP's infighting and publicly invited kaMagwaza-Msibi to join the ANC. `We like her in the ANC and we know how to take care of women,' said Minister of Human Settlements Tokyo Sexwale at an ANC rally on January 24. KaMagwaza-Msibi rejected in a letter to the media the ANC's overture, but the invitation reinforces the long-standing notion that the IFP is dominated by traditionalists who do not want to be led by a woman. Although IFP Parliamentarian Helen Makhubu also rejected this characterization on behalf of female party members, National Chairperson of the IFP Women's Brigade Thembi Nzuza (a known supporter of kaMagwaza-Msibi) issued no such statements, suggesting that there is merit to the issue of gender inequality (and even harassment) within the party.

KAMAGWAZA-MSIBI IS GOING NOWHERE SOON

18. (SBU) The decision to redeploy kaMagwaza-Msibi may come to naught, however, due to a technicality, according to Chris

Mlotshwa, a manager in the Office of the Speaker of the KZN Legislature. After the IFP lost the 2009 general election to the ANC in KZN, kaMagwaza-Msibi declined to take up her seat as a KZN legislator, opting to remain mayor of Zululand, Mlotshwa told Pol/Econ Officer and Assistant on February 10. As she is no longer on the official list of legislators, kaMagwaza-Msibi cannot be appointed to the KZN Legislature until the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) reviews the IFP's petition for kaMagwaza-Msibi's reinstatement. The end result is that kaMagwaza-Msibi will remain mayor of Zululand until the end of May, Mlotshwa said, when the IEC will next consider such petitions.

COMMENT

19. (SBU) KaMagwaza-Msibi will likely never leave the party she joined as a teenager in 1975. Her recent withdrawal from the public and from party meetings should not be seen as a sign of weakness but rather an indication of her strong distaste for public power plays. Also, she seems truly hurt that political rivals within the party would portray her as anti-Buthelezi or power hungry. Unless Buthelezi decides to step down at the IFP elective conference in May, kaMagwaza-Msibi will likely (as she did during the 2008 conference) declare her loyalty to the Prince and the IFP, and fall in line with party directives. If the IFP presidency does become vacant, kaMagwaza-Msibi will respond to calls to run for president and will likely win - to the chagrin of party traditionalists who never imagined or wanted a woman at the helm of the IFP. If the traditionalists do not revolt and kaMagwaza-Msibi can hold the party together, the IFP might yet become a relevant political force in the new South Africa.

DERDERIAN